



A.G. on Ag
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We Want to Hear From You! Listening Sessions from May 28–July 8

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Help us create an enduring vision for California agriculture



“Agriculture’s past successes in providing an abundant and safe food supply at reasonable cost to the consumer will not automatically assure similar benefits in the future. [We] need to formulate a comprehensive food policy [to] ensure a climate in which agriculture can perform as effectively in the future as it has in the past.” ~ Vision 2010 (CDFFA, circa 1990)

Many challenges face agriculture in the 21st century, including invasive pests and diseases, water shortages, urban encroachment and trade issues. But no challenge is greater than renewing the commitment to agriculture and its

fundamental role in society. We have witnessed intense debates over renewal of the [federal farm bill](#) and deliberations in California over the [Delta and its future](#). Food shortages in other countries have resulted in starvation, social unrest and hoarding. Yet, for many Californians, walking into a grocery store or a local farmers’ market and selecting seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, meat and dairy products is taken as a birthright. Through outreach and education, consumers and policymakers alike need to understand and support agricultural policies that will ensure this continuing abundance of food, fiber and fuel that benefits everyone. After all, as Leon Panetta said, “Agriculture is a strategic resource for our nation.”

With input from a wide range of stakeholder groups, the [California State Board of Food and Agriculture](#) is leading an initiative to create a shared vision for the future of California agriculture. This planning “forecast” will help guide public policy and investment priorities as well as give direction for agriculture within regional development efforts around the state.

Undertaking a planning process for the state’s agriculture will require cooperation and collaboration on a grand scale and with broad scope. During the [farm bill listening sessions](#) held in 2006, one consistent message came through from participants: The hallmark of California agriculture is its innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. Now is the time for that same spirit to bring together the many different voices and create a sustainable vision to shape the future of agriculture into the year 2030.

On May 13, the state board president Al Montna announced plans for a series of listening sessions to provide a public forum for input into this visioning process. Public commentary is essential for this agricultural vision to fully represent California. Perspectives will be sought from farmers, ranchers and processors as well as those in the nutrition, conservation and rural development fields. From **May 28 to July 8**, the state board and CDFFA are hosting six statewide listening sessions to capture the public voice at the following locations: Redding (May 28), Sacramento (May 29), San Luis Obispo (July 1), Tulare (July 2), Oxnard (July 7) and Escondido (July 8). For details go to www.cdfa.ca.gov/agvision/.

As a way to organize and capture information, we request that participants address at least one of the following questions. 1) What is your vision for California agriculture by 2030? 2) What will be the biggest challenge in achieving that vision? 3) In 2030, how has public perception of agriculture changed? 4) What is a “must have” in an Ag Vision for California?

To participate, RSVP to AgVision@cdfa.ca.gov at least three days prior to each session and indicate if you are speaking or listening. To ensure that we capture your views, please email your written statement. If you are unable to attend any of the sessions, you may email your comments by **July 18, 2008**.

As always, thank you for your support of California agriculture.

A.G. Kawamura

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